

4-12-2004

University of Northern Iowa Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes, April 12, 2004

University of Northern Iowa. Faculty Senate.

Copyright ©2004 Faculty Senate, University of Northern Iowa

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/facsenate_documents



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Recommended Citation

University of Northern Iowa. Faculty Senate., "University of Northern Iowa Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes, April 12, 2004" (2004). *Documents - Faculty Senate*. 1002.
https://scholarworks.uni.edu/facsenate_documents/1002

This Minutes is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Senate at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Documents - Faculty Senate by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

Summary of Faculty Senate Meeting 4/12/04

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Heston at 3:19 P.M.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Motion to approve the minutes of the 3/22/04 meeting by Senator Chancey; second by Senator Moore.

Motion passed.

CALL FOR PRESS IDENTIFICATION

No press present.

COMMENTS FROM PROVOST PODOLEFSKY

Provost Podolefsky remarked that the Board of Regents will be meeting April 21 in Vinton, and our curriculum package was one of the docketed items but he has received notice that the other two regents institutions are objecting to the three new majors and they have been pulled from the docket but will be addressed in May.

COMMENTS FROM FACULTY CHAIR, CAROL COOPER

Dr. Cooper noted that Greg Nicholas, Executive Director of the Board of Regents, was on campus Friday and discussed the retirement incentive plan, which will not be renewed.

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR HESTON

Chair Heston passed out a letter to the Senators for their information from David Duncan, Department of Mathematics, that Senator Varzavand received in response to Senate discussion on the Liberal Arts Core at the March 8, 2004 meeting.

She also passed out a report from Jeffrey Copeland, Department Head, English Language and Literature, on the ACT waiver. Without Senate action, the waiver expires at the end of the summer.

Dr. Cooper suggested that Dr. Copeland's report be added to today's minutes as an appendix.

ONGOING BUSINESS

History of LAC was provided by Provost Prodolefsky.

Senator MacLin reiterated that we will be referring today to the LACC (Liberal Arts Core Committee) 3/04/04 proposal. He moved that that items 3 and 2 of the 3/04/04 LACC Proposal be interchanged so that we address them as items 1, 3, and 2; second by Senator van Wormer.

Motion passed.

Senator Chancey moved that the Core Competencies Category I be established to include Reading and Writing, Speaking and Listening, Quantitative Techniques and Understanding, and Personal Wellness; second by Senator Vinton.

Motion passed with one opposed and one abstention.

Senator Couch Breitbach moved to accept the LACC's recommendation that Capstone be given its own category and broadened to embrace several other types of senior experiences; second by Senator Chancey.

A lengthy discussion followed on recommendation #3, that the new Capstone model as outlined in the Capstone Proposal and FAQs about the New Capstone Model (2/23/04) be adopted as a separate category (VI) with this requirement being reviewed by the Liberal Arts Core Committee after a period of three years.

Senator Romanin moved to call the question; second by Senator Chancey. Motion failed.

More discussion followed.

Senator Wurtz moved to call the question; second by Senator Chancey. Motion failed. Motion was again defeated with only 9 voting for the motion.

Discussion again followed.

Chair Heston called for further discussion, and hearing none called for a vote. The motion to broaden the Capstone category as proposed by the LACC's recommendation was carried with 8 for, 3 against, and 3 abstentions.

Senator Chancey moved that Social Science Category be satisfied by students completing 6 hours; one course from Group A and one course from Group B, with new course alignments to be established by the LACC in close consultation with a representative body of

faculty teaching the courses in this category; second by Senator Couch Breitbach.

A lengthy discussion followed.

An amended proposal to reduce the Social Science category from 9 to 6 hours leaving the Groups A, B and C the same and asking the LACC to work with the CSBS to distribute into two groups, a Group A and Group B, with students required to take 3 hours from Group A and 3 hours from Group B.

Motion was defeated by one vote with 6 voting for, 7 voting against, and 1 abstentions.

ADJOURNMENT

DRAFT OF SENATORS REVIEW

MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE MEETING 4/12/04 1606

PRESENT: Ronnie Bankston, Karen Couch Breitbach, Clif Chancey, Carol Cooper, Cindy Herndon, Melissa Heston, Sue Koch, Otto MacLin, Susan Moore, Chris Ogbondah, Steve O'Kane, Aaron Podolefsky, Tom Romanin, Jesse Swan, Dhirendra Vajpeyi, Katherine vanWormer, Susan Wurtz, Shah Varzavand, Donna Vinton

Jerry Smith, Management, was attending for Mir Zaman.

Absent: David Christensen and Gayle Pohl

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Heston at 3:19 P.M.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Motion to approve the minutes of the 3/22/04 meeting by Senator Chancey; second by Senator Moore.

Senator vanWormer asked that her remarks regarding justification for seconding the motion be changed to "there is some pressure to eliminate hours from the Liberal Arts Core."

Motion to approve the minutes with vanWormer's correction passed.

CALL FOR PRESS IDENTIFICATION

No press present.

COMMENTS FROM PROVOST PODOLEFSKY

Provost Podolefsky remarked that the Board of Regents will be meeting April 21 in Vinton, and our curriculum package was one of the docketed items. Today he received notice that the other two regents institutions are objecting to the three new majors in Bioinformatics, Software Engineering and Computer Networking. These have been pulled from the docket and will be addressed in May. This has been discussed between the three institutions and Iowa and Iowa State are not convinced that we are the right institution to be doing these programs. He is optimistic that by May an agreement will be reached.

COMMENTS FROM FACULTY CHAIR, CAROL COOPER

Dr. Cooper noted that Greg Nicholas, Executive Director of the Board of Regents, was on campus Friday. He noted in his discussion that the retirement incentive plan will not be renewed and he urged the university to accommodate eligible faculty interested in this option.

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR HESTON

Chair Heston passed out a letter to the Senators from David Duncan, Department of Mathematics, that Senator Varzavand received in response to Senate discussion on the Liberal Arts Core at the March 8, 2004 meeting. She noted that this does raise the issue of being respectfully of our colleagues' work and thus perhaps a bit more thoughtful in our discussions.

She also passed out a report from Jeffrey Copeland, Department Head, English Language and Literature, on the ACT waiver. Based on their study of 782 UNI students, they concluded:

- 1) When the writings of those students who were "not" ACT Exempt and who took the "College Reading and Writing" course (620:005) at UNI were evaluated, the results indicated these students scored well within the "range of desirable characteristics" established for Liberal Arts Core writing tasks (using the established guidelines for desired learning outcomes for writing in LAC courses to evaluate the writings). Therefore, the "College Reading and Writing" course is, in fact, providing UNI students with the desirable writing skills and the goals and objectives of that course are being met.
- 2) Those students who were "ACT Exempt" who did "not" take the "College Reading and Writing" course still scored significantly

higher, on average, than those students who were not ACT Exempt and who took the writing course. In other words, those who were exempted from taking the writing course produced writings that were judged to be significantly better in quality than those students who were not exempt and who completed the writing course.

3) Those students who were, technically, exempted from the writing course but who were still required to take the writing because of specific program requirements scored the highest of all, on average, when their writings were evaluated. In short, those who were exempted but who were still required to take the writing course improved their writing abilities significantly, to the point where their writing went from "excellent" to "outstanding" in terms of quality.

Dr. Copeland noted in his report that the English Department as a group voted to let the waiver expire at the end of this summer, and the University Writing Committee concurs with the English faculty on this decision.

Dr. Cooper suggested that Dr. Copeland's report be added to today's minutes as an appendix.

ONGOING BUSINESS

Liberal Arts Core Proposals

Chair Heston asked Provost Podolefsky to provide the Senate with a background of the Liberal Arts Core changes. Because things take time in a university setting, actions are often initiated several years prior and as senators are rotated in we lose continuity. The issues that are being dealt with to some extent in this proposal were ones that were brought up in the 1995 NCA report and again in 2001.

Provost Podolefsky noted that when he interviewed for this job six years ago or so, it seemed clear that one of the concerns on the part of the faculty was the LAC. Shortly after he took the job, the university had to begin writing a self-study, which took over a year to complete. That was followed by a visit by a team from the North Central Association (NCA). They provided a set of recommendations in February 2001. During the time prior to their visit there was a lot of conversation on campus about student appreciation of the Liberal Arts Core. There was concern that students would say things such as "this is just a Gen Ed course, its not really very important." There was also discussion that faculty also said things such as "this is just a Gen Ed course. You don't want to be here, I don't want to be here, let's get it over with." There was a lengthy conversation and a survey of students by the Marketing Department and the General Education Committee proposed changing the name, which was brought before the Senate. The consensus of the Senate was that this was a good

idea but not if it's just a name change. The Provost and the Gen Ed Committee argued that what you call something does reflect the value placed on it, and the name Liberal Arts Core, which was the Gen Ed Committee's recommendation, reflected a high quality educational experience. The Senate asked the Committee to bring back expanded ideas on what a Liberal Arts Core should be. The Provost brought back a document to Senate in March 2001 as to why they wanted to change the name to the Liberal Arts Core, citing the numerous places in our catalog and mission statement that refer to the liberal arts. Guidelines were also brought back to the Senate detailing why they didn't think it should be just a name change. There were four areas identified for improvement: 1) Image, understanding, and motivation; 2) Course pedagogy and content; 3) Focus on formal curriculum, which included catching up on the program reviews which were way behind; and, 4) Coordination and implementation, to follow up on the NCA recommendations to have a coordinator to help bring synergy to the program. At no point did he or the committee contemplate what those areas would be about. It is worth noting that the Liberal Arts Core is about what we do and that many of the things that have gone on in the last couple of years have been tied to this general idea. Since March 2001, we have accomplished about 3/4's of these recommendations.

Senator MacLin reiterated that we will be referring today to the LACC (Liberal Arts Core Committee) 3/04/04 proposal. He moved that that items 3 and 2 of the 3/04/04 LACC Proposal be interchanged so that we address them as items 1, 3, and 2 as that the new Capstone model may offset some reduction in the Social Science category and it may be important to know the outcome of item 3 prior to discussion and voting of item 2; second by Senator van Wormer.

Senator Chancey responded that he understands and agrees with Senator MacLin.

Motion passed.

Senator Chancey moved that the Core Competencies Category I be established to include Reading and Writing, Speaking and Listening, Quantitative Techniques and Understanding, and Personal Wellness; second by Senator Vinton.

Senator Swan reiterated that this would move it to the head of the LAC Curriculum, as it combines things.

Motion passed with one opposed and one abstention.

Senator Couch Breitbach moved to accept the LACC's recommendation that Capstone be given its own category and broadened to embrace

several other types of senior experiences; second by Senator Chancey.

Senator Swan asked if this means that in three years this category will be reviewed. Senator Chancey replied as a member of the LACC, that yes, that would be the case.

Senator MacLin questioned the purpose of that review.

Senator Vajpeyi responded that it depends on what the review reveals and what the Senate's wishes are at that time.

Senator Jerry Smith, Co-chair of the LACC, responded that one of the major thrusts of the review is to see if we are getting a lot of course proposals that will fall into this category. If so, and depending on student responses from these courses, then the LACC would either recommend to establish it on a permanent basis, to renew it, or to drop it.

Senator Swan questioned what would the LACC need to make a recommendation to make this a permanent change.

Bev Kopper, Co-chair of the LACC, responded that the committee did not talk about specific numbers but they are looking forward to things such as the results of the Carver Institute, a call for multi-disciplinary courses to be developed. As courses are developed to then make them Capstone offerings to help reduce some of the burden that has been on CNS.

Senator Chancey commented that one criterion would be for those that have been burdened with Capstone, that the change had provided relief to the extent that the course is generating wider support and is sustainable by the faculty, and we will need the three years to see.

Senator Romanin asked Dr. Kopper if the change is made, is it a possible outcome that those that are currently providing the course could reduce their commitment to the course. Dr. Kopper responded that the committee has talked about the need to provide those sections because this is a Core requirement. However, the LACC has made the commitment to review any new Capstone proposals as soon as possible and to offer them. There are individuals who currently teach Capstone and who enjoy it and want to continue it. Obviously we want those instructors to continue to offer sections.

Senator Romanin noted that his concern is with students currently in the system that this change not disrupt the number of sections available to those students; he wondered if there a mechanism in place to make sure this doesn't happen.

Dr. Kopper responded that this could be coordinated in a manner similar to the Humanities sections, in that the Humanities Chair calls together at the beginning of the semester all the deans,

department heads, and the Registrar's Office, as well as herself, and look at the enrollment needs and plan accordingly.

Senator Bankston questioned if this proposal were passed, in terms of evaluation process, he would feel more comfortable if other variables were taken into consideration, such as ratio of adjunct to tenure-track faculty teaching the courses. He would also wonder about the number of proposals that were submitted, how many were accepted, and what the criteria was for those decisions. He further would like to know how many students would take Capstone in their own major since one of the goals is to try to create a diversification experience in the classroom. He wondered what type of diversification do we now have in Capstone, and how would the new process impact class size, which is a resource issue. These all need to be taken into consideration to evaluate if we are at better place then we were.

Senator Swan commented that the issue of diversification, and students taking Capstone in their own major is a great concern of his, and we should look into this. He noted that faculty members in his college with heavy commitments in their majors and other areas of the LAC have wondered what incentives will be provided to enable and encourage them to pursue Capstone courses as well.

Senator Chancey responded that as a department head in looking at this issue, resources are the concern of the department, and would treat it as any other LAC course offering and not look outside this department.

Senator Vajpeyi noted that if the department and dean are committed to the course and program, then he would hope they would provide so it is a healthy course and program, but noted that it is hard to put a dollar amount on it at this time.

Senator MacLin stated that he was intrigued with Senator Bankston's question and noticed there were no responses, and perhaps the committee will respond once those questions start coming up. Chair Heston responded that she took Senator Bankston's questions as suggestions. Dr. Kopper noted that she took them as suggestions as well and that the LACC is open to any other suggestions anyone may have. In terms of resources, there are several courses that are currently being taught that have been suggested as Capstone offerings.

In response to Senator Swan's question about restricting enrollment according to ones major, Dr. Kopper stated that the Committee looked at this as a Capstone experience for the LAC, really valuing the interdisciplinary nature of the course. One of the goals of the LAC is helping students to develop into lifelong learners, integrate issues and look beyond their specific disciplines. The models came out of looking at those goals, which is why it is proposed as a Capstone experience for the Core rather than for a major.

Associate Provost Koch added that we need to keep in mind that there will be some courses that will fit this broader model of Capstone that are requirements in majors, and if that is the case, then there will be the opportunity for the student to apply that course to both the Capstone requirement and a major requirement, which will give them a little more flexibility. This is something that the committee will need to consider as these course proposals come in.

Senator Smith noted that there was a lot of concern about this in the discussions. If we get proposals that reach beyond majors we will be less inclined to accept ones that will keep students in their majors. A lot of concern centers on how many proposals they will they get. If we don't have many then we will have to do more types of things where students will have to double-count. He would prefer to see this as a course that students take over and beyond their majors.

Dr. Cooper stated that on the original list there were some XXX:000 level classes and as this is a senior level experience they should all be XXX:100 level.

Dr. Kopper responded that those were included as examples because in discussions at the senate level, there was a question about whether there are any current courses that might be Capstone offerings.

Senator Vajpeyi asked Associate Provost Koch how often departments allow "double dipping", allowing a course to meet two requirements. Dr. Koch responded that it does vary from one major to another, but it does happen often. The courses that she was talking about were courses that are part of a major but are in another department, and there are all kinds of cross departmental cooperation and it is those kinds of courses that are more likely to fit the criteria of Capstone.

Senator Herndon noted that she is in favor of the cross disciplinary courses and many of the courses that have double dipping are lower level courses and are prerequisites to something else. Students required to take a course for their major should not be allowed to count that as a Capstone experience and should take something else to meet that requirement.

Senator Varzavand asked Associate Provost Koch if there is a senior research experience that serves as a Capstone experience. Dr. Koch responded that there are a few but it is not really common.

Linda Walsh, Psychology, stated that this year many departments had new courses cut from the curriculum package because of pressure to not extend the curriculum and she is wondering how a bevy of new Capstone courses might affect departments wanting to add other new courses.

Dr. Kopper responded that not all departments are in a situation where they feel they will not be able to add new Capstone experiences. There are current courses that may be taught as Capstone and one department at least has said they intend to offer sections. In looking at proposals for the Carver Institute, there are those that have stepped forward and said that they are interested in developing interdisciplinary courses, and in some instances, Capstone faculty are involved.

Nate Green, NISG Vice-Chair and member of the LACC, noted that in talking with students about Capstone, one of the biggest issues they have is that there is such a wide variety of experiences, from the best experience to a waste of time. He liked that idea of using courses that are already in place as there are some courses that would make outstanding Capstone experiences. The more successful Capstone's culminate by addressing a particular social issue, however, many deal only with environmental issues. He likes the fact that this proposal seeks to expand the Capstone experience, and in a way to make it a better and more rewarding experience for students and instructors.

Senator MacLin stated that he is interested in hearing what Provost Podolefsky's response is to Dr. Walsh's concerns. If we come to that point in time again where we need to cut new offerings, will he feel more comfortable proposing Capstone offerings or other departmental courses?

Provost Podolefsky responded that since he's been doing this, and this is his fourth curriculum cycle, we have typically added more courses than we drop. The Board of Regents has accepted our argument that we can replace one course being offered every semester with two courses being offered less frequently. This year, due in part to the Board politics and the recurring budget cuts, was a bad year to come forward with 90 new and 60 dropped courses. There is no reason to assume that this year is predicting future years, it was just a bad year and we didn't want our curriculum package returned to us.

Senator Vinton wondered if some of the Capstone proposals could be offered under the experimental number and only be offered a couple of times rather than be a permanent part of the curriculum.

In response to Senator MacLin's question as to how these courses be listed, would they be treated as separate courses or all under the Capstone listing, Associate Provost Koch noted that there could be a Capstone heading similar to a heading such as Non-Western Cultures, with courses listed under that.

Provost Podolefsky noted that this is an interesting detail and there are a variety of methods to do this, continue with the regular course number and add a "C" for Capstone, create a

separate number such as 900 for Social Science, create a Capstone number.

Senator Swan noted that this seems to be what the Senate will be approving, a separate Capstone category, which is what he believes he is voting for, with each section having its own name and that might be cross listed in another area of the catalog. Dr. Kopper affirmed that that is correct.

Senator Herndon asked if the LACC will have the final say in which courses are approved and which are not? Dr. Kopper responded that there is not an established review process but typically what happens is that those proposals come to the LACC and they are then brought to the Faculty Senate, or at times they are embedded in the normal curriculum process and they go through to the University Curriculum Committee and then come to the Faculty Senate. What is being suggested is to be able to review those proposals on an immediate basis so they can be offered on a provisional basis as soon as they have been reviewed.

Chair Heston commented that the Senate needs to think about if they want to approve what the LACC decides in terms of courses. Currently if it is an experimental course the Senate doesn't see it. But a real change in the curriculum, which adding courses to Capstone is, the Senate may want to supervise that process.

Senator Bankston remarked that the Senate has identified several key points which when combined raises questions. We've identified that we would like the courses to be XXX:100 level courses, and that there are existing courses on campus that may be appropriate for Capstone. But we would also like a diverse student population across the majors for the course, which raises the question about prerequisites. If you have an existing course that has a prerequisite, how do we handle it?

Dr. Kopper responded that currently there is a university policy that states that if there is a course in the LAC it cannot have a prerequisite other than another LAC course. If it were a major course with several sections, that course would have to be revised so there would not be those major prerequisites but sections could still be offered to majors only.

Senator Romanin moved to call the question; second by Senator Chancey. Motion failed.

Senator Swan noted that in response to Senator Bankston's question that would be an instance where the LACC would not approve the course for Capstone offering.

Senator Wurtz asked those that did not vote in favor of calling the question what information they were lacking.

Senator Herndon said that when voting for this proposal, she is not sure what she is voting for with all these nebulous things

still being unanswered such as "double-dipping." She would like to know if she needs those answers and to know if the Senate will have those answers at this time.

Senator Couch Breitbach responded that she has served on the LACC and there are numerous questions that come to that committee, and the Senate needs to trust the LACC to look at each situation individually and to do the right thing, as many of these questions are individual issues, and to bring their recommendations forward to the Senate. And the LACC reports directly to the Faculty Senate, they are an extension of the Faculty Senate and report to us.

Senator vanWormer noted that she did not vote to call the question is because the issue is so complicated and wouldn't it be so much better to eliminate Capstone altogether and free up hours so the students could take another elective.

Dr. Kopper remarked that the LACC had a long, thoughtful dialogue on whether to eliminate Capstone. As a university, we state that our undergraduate programs are founded on a strong liberal arts education and the LACC looked closely at what the Capstone experience can provide for our students. Looking at how it was originally designed and how it fits with our goals of the Core, the Committee felt strongly that it was important to maintain the LAC Capstone requirement. She recently attended the NCA annual meeting where they talked about the new criteria for accreditation and one of the things they commented on was in the self-study they hoped institutions would list their strengths, weaknesses, and things to "celebrate", and as an example of things to celebrate they listed a Capstone experience in a general education program. And in looking at peer institutions many do have Capstone experiences that they feel are very valuable. The Committee decided not to eliminate it because it was a very important part of the Core, an important experience for our students.

Senator Wurtz moved to call the question; second by Senator Chancey. Motion failed.

Senator MacLin commented that he was not voting to call the question because he doesn't really know what the questions are to ask but as long as the Senate is asking good questions and there are good responses he feels we should continue the discussion. He believes it is an important topic and we need to cover the bases and there seems to still be a lot of details that need to be worked out.

Senator Couch Breitbach stated that when she was a member of the LACC she pushed hard for this option and she feels that this provides the students with an elective, another choice to broaden their experiences. This provides our students with many aspects of the original Capstone model but allows them to choose their

area of interest while broadening how they look at issues dealing with their area of interest.

Nate Green noted that he echoed Senator Couch Breitbach's sentiments, and that the LACC is more than willing to discuss this issue and noted that there is a good portion of this issue that is still in the future, and we can't predict what will happen. He noted that because it seems difficult to grasp is no reason to drop it. Capstone is very valuable and this proposal has the potential to make it much better.

Senator Swan remarked that he is a great supporter of senior seminars and the way this is being talked about sounds fantastic but there is a lot that is amorphous and people can see what they want to in it. From his perspective, he very much wants majors to not take senior seminars or Capstones that are in their area or with their favorite professor. There are many concerns that we are looking at and we need to ask about them, try to work them out and that is why this discussion is continuing.

Ken Baughman, English Department, representing Humanities and Fine Arts on the LACC, stated that this Capstone concept offers some attractive opportunities and flexibility both to the LAC and our curriculum in general. All the suggestions have been very valuable and he encourages the Senate to pass this proposal but to be attentive to the questions and suggestions for review of what then happens. There is the opportunity for something rather exciting and innovative to be introduced into the curriculum that we would find a lot of enjoyment in teaching and our students would benefit from participating in.

Senator Wurtz remarked to the LACC that she has a course on leadership that she is working on and has already integrated some science in, and she will be looking to add some literature to the course. As a potential Capstone course, it would not be approved if it had only token other disciplines. She would have to really show that it solidly includes other disciplines. Why would she object to it being counted for a business major in that it is a business course because the LACC wouldn't approve it unless it has solid information from other disciplines?

Dr. Kopper responded that it would need to integrate content from two or more diverse disciplines. And if it had prerequisites from the Business Department it would not be approved. In talking about the process, Dr. Kopper stated that while there are procedures and forms that must be completed the LACC also invite the faculty who are proposing the course to come for a sort of consultative session. They want to be flexible enough about this and to be able to have a dialogue to work it out.

Senator Smith noted that the uncertainty some have about this proposal may perhaps come from the uncertainty that the LACC is unsure of what kind of response they'll be getting from faculty. So the Committee is unable to give definitive answers because we

may be faced with the possibility of not having many proposals and having to carry a number of sections of the existing courses in CSN. If they receive a large number of proposals they will be in a position to be more demanding in the front-end review process, but if we have too few then the Committee needs the flexibility to be more lenient. The nature of the course is that we want it to be open.

Senator Vinton commented that she supports the proposal because not only would these courses offer new opportunities for students, it would also offer new opportunities for faculty. The concept of doing interdisciplinary and innovative things is not new but this offers the possibility, and it might encourage faculty to feel more ownership for the LAC.

Chair Heston called for more discussion, and hearing none, called for a vote. The motion to broaden the Capstone category as proposed by the LACC's recommendation was carried with 8 for, 3 against, and 3 abstentions.

The Senate took a brief recess.

Senator Chancey moved that Social Science Category be satisfied by students completing 6 hours; one course from Group A and one course from Group B, with new course alignments being established by the LACC in close consultation with a representative body of faculty teaching the courses in this category; second by Senator Couch Breitbach.

Senator Swan stated that he did not understand the motion; he thought it was going to be to accept the proposal from the LACC and this is different because it is saying that courses in the reorganized Group A and B Social Science section will be approved indefinitely by the LACC. Or is the motion to approve the LACC recommendation, which is to re-configure the Social Science section as they presented it to us, which would include reducing the required hours down to six?

Senator Chancey replied that his motion is the LACC's recommendations.

Senator Swan noted that Senator Chancey's motion is different from the words saying "with Section A and B instructed by the LACC to be improved." He wants to be clear that we are approving the proposal as presented to us on paper. He reiterated that the courses have already been redistributed into an A and B section.

Dr. Kopper responded that she understands the motion to be what the LACC has talked about, wanting to get the input from a representative body of those faculty teaching those courses as to what the group titles may be, and then the alignment. The proposal that was presented to the Senate in March was what that

might look like with some titles and courses. What the Committee would like is to receive input from a representative body of faculty who teach those courses in terms of what they feel would be the appropriate titles for those groups.

Senator O'Kane reiterated that we are not voting on that potential alignment of courses, but rather that there is a group A and B, and that the requirement is 6 hours.

Senator Chancey stated that when he responded yes, this was the LACC's proposal, he was reading from something the LACC had passed on 3/26/04, and it says no more than the Social Sciences category should be 6 hours and that the courses should be divided between the A and B categories, with the division being decided by the representative body.

Senator Swan reiterated that this means all the courses currently listed will be in that category, just distributed between A and B, in consultation with the Social Sciences faculty. No course currently listed in the category will be removed.

Dr. Kopper replied that there are four courses that are in the original group C that are not currently being offered and have not been offered for a while, and the Committee concurs with the Category IV Review Report that those be eliminated.

Senator Swan noted that it was his understanding that that was part of the LAC curriculum recommendation but he does not hear that in the motion that was just made.

Dr. Kopper responded that from the Committee's perspective they would agree that if there are courses that are not being offered and haven't been offered for whatever reason, that they be eliminated from those listings. But if they will be offered, then they should be included. Senator MacLin stated that he had expected Senator Chancey to read item #2 from the March 4 memo as the motion, but he read something altogether different. It would be nice to have a copy of what Senator Chancey read from, and it seems that things have changed since the 3/04/04 document that the Senator received.

Discussion followed with Dr. Kopper noting that no new courses have been added to the proposal.

Dr. Walsh commented that limiting the Social Sciences Category to six hours might call for new courses to offset the reduction of three hours.

Dr. Kopper replied that in the Category IV report there were no additional new courses recommended, however, they recommended staying with the 9 hours.

Senator Chancey responded to Senator MacLin saying that his motion, which is a simpler motion, follows directly from the

discussion that took place here at the Senate, and any document put before the Senate was illustrative of what the LACC was discussing. His current motion was to provide greater freedom to the departments and faculty that teach in this area.

And in response to Senator Walsh, Senator Chancey noted that he knows of no mechanism that is going to discuss courses of this nature, which he would expect to come from the Social Sciences College.

Dean Wallace responded that she appreciates what Senator Chancey is saying, and that the Social Sciences faculty should have an opportunity to dictate what the hours should be in that category and not have it dictated by the LACC. Whether the College even wants to have an A and a B should also be dictated by the College. In the proposal it is being suggested that the College may wish to divide the six hours into those two categories but that may not be what the departments think is the best rational decision for the students.

Senator Chancey noted that the use of the word "dictate" was not used in his motion.

Chair Heston noted that it might help clarify the issue if the current motion be withdrawn and have a substitute motion that reflects what is in the 3/04/04 LAC proposal, given that that is the document that we have.

Senator Chancey replied that he likes his proposal and is sticking by it.

Senator MacLin asked to see the document that Senator Chancey's proposal is based on, as well as the simplification documents. He also noted that he would like to know what precipitated it and what has changed. He keeps getting documents and things keep changing with this, and he's quite concerned about that. He stated that there had been talk prior to this meeting that things would be changed based on discussions people had had and he had not believed it, but it seems like things have indeed changed again. The changes may be subtle or more simple, but it is an important issue and it would be nice to see the documentation with the changes.

Senator Swan remarked that this does indeed sound like a new motion. One important issue is that if a course is dropped from the LAC as an option, whatever category it is in, he is interested in it, as he wants his students to have a full range of opportunities. This body should be voting on the addition or dropping of courses to the LAC. There is a proposal to drop four courses from the LAC and it should not be left up to the LACC and a group of faculty; he wants us to vote on this. The proposal is to drop these four courses from the Social Science Category.

Senator Chancey responded that his motion did not speak of dropping four courses.

Senator Swan replied that that may be the case but he wants to be clear on this, it's a change in his expectations, and what we're talking about is that these four courses will not be dropped according to this motion. The Social Science College faculty and the LACC would re-negotiate the redistribution of all the courses now in three groups into two groups, labeled A and B. The Senate is supposed to decide about these labels, what goes into the LAC, what courses are in there, and it seems that there was a very clear proposal before, and this proposal is less clear. He thinks we should be discussing and modifying the original proposals brought to the Senate, and then vote on them.

Senator Smith stated that it seems that the essence of the proposal is to drop not courses in Group C, and to accommodate the concerns raised by some of the faculty in Social and Behavioral Sciences College, to open up where those courses would go and to allow them to have input on the names for the new groups. He understands the concern but we are not talking about dropping specific courses or adding any, just a shifting of courses from C into groups A and B.

He also noted that the LACC's intent was to take this into advisement with the faculty of the college and then make a recommendation to the Faculty Senate. It was not the intent that the College faculty themselves decide where it goes. The LACC, as a representative of the Faculty Senate, should be in agreement in making recommendations.

Senator O'Kane commented that hearing from the Dean, the college does not necessarily think there should be two groups, nor do they think 3 hours should be dropped.

Dean Wallace responded that they have yet to be able to have a discussion in the College that if they had 6 hours, what would be the rational decision of what choices the students should have for those 6 hours; they have never had that discussion.

Senator Chancey responded to Senator MacLin that his motion was a simpler motion than expected but there are no other documents.

Senator MacLin stated that he is still trying to get an idea of what the motion is.

Senator Chancey stated that the motion he made is to reduce the Social Sciences Category from 9 to 6 hours, and to leave open discussion with representative faculty exactly what form the reduced categories would take.

Senator Wurtz asked for clarification; one statement was that the college never had such a discussion and the other is that the college never had the opportunity.

Senator Smith replied that as a member of the LACC, he met with the Faculty Senate of the college and talked about this proposal, and he considered that the opportunity for discussion, and there was a discussion; they expressed their concerns and he responded.

Michael Shott, Sociology, Anthropology and Criminology, responded to Senator Smith's comments, noted that he attended that College Senate meeting and remembered the discussion, and there was nearly universal opposition to the LACC views. It was a discussion but not agreement.

Senator Swan noted that this was important information of which he was unaware. It seems, after further discussion, that the effect if we vote affirmative would be to reduce the Social Science Category from 9 to 6 hours and to charge the LACC to work with the Social Science faculty to figure out how to propose a redistribution of the courses next year. We will have a reduction to two groups and take another year to figure out how to redistribute those courses. The motion appears to be to have the reduction and then have them in two groups but we don't know how or when they will be organized. He has trouble with these two parts and is asking for clarity. Perhaps we can ask Senator Chancey to reconsider the form of his motion to make this clear.

Senator Chancey responded that he will treat that as a friendly amendment.

It was noted that the Senator that had seconded that motion, Senator Couch Breitbach, had left. Gerri Perreault, who was substituting for her, agreed to the friendly amendment.

Senator Walsh noted that she was concerned by Senator Swan's comment that he was unaware of the College's opposition to this decrease. When this first appeared on the agenda for the Faculty Senate, a position statement was sent representing the opinions of all seven departments and the College Senate that opposed the drop in hours, and hopefully it was forwarded to all Senators.

Chair Heston responded that the Senate did receive that from CSBS Senate Chair Gorton.

Senator Swan stated that it is becoming very clear that this was formal opposition.

Dr. Kopper stated that she wanted to comment on the issue of the process of the LACC has used with consultation. This goes back to spring 2003 when the Committee began looking at and discussing these issues. In January the LACC was informed about the MGT recommendations and the Board of Regents recommendations, and they then started discussions related to evaluating the Core. In February they contacted the Category IV review team because they wanted to be upfront that this was now on the LACC's agenda, and the Category IV review was in midstream. They told them of the

MGT and Board of Regents' recommendations and that they would be looking at the Core as a whole, possibly reducing the number of hours in the LAC, and examining all the categories. She was invited to a Department Heads meeting by Dean Wallace in the summer and talked with them about these discussions. In the fall, once they had put their ideas down, there were several meetings of the CSBS Senate. She contacted and met with Dean Wallace regarding the LACC's ideas related to Group C, and in view of the fact that half of those courses were not being taught, that they were looking at merging the remaining courses into A and B and reducing the hours from 9 to 6. She reported that they delayed in reporting to the Senate because of the concern that not all of the senates had given their inputs. Specifically they waited for the CSBS Senate position statement, delaying their reporting to the Faculty Senate because of that. In March they distributed the college senate's opposition to this. She wants to be clear that the Committee has been very active. She is very appreciative that the CSBS Senate has invited her to several of the meetings, and as soon as they were aware of this the Committee has been trying to dialogue with the CSBS.

Dr. Shott commented that he is grateful to Dr. Kopper for describing the background and the series of events that occurred in consulting with the Social Sciences. In respect to Non-Western Cultures, he was not formally notified of those changes that have since been formally withdrawn. He believes that the consultation with the Non-Western Cultures category faculty was not as extensive as it might have been and it may not had gotten through to all the faculty as in the case of the proposed Social Science changes. He made the friendly suggestion that all of us in the future pay more regard to meaningful, systemic consultation to the faculty at large.

Dean Wallace noted that everything that Dr. Kopper says is correct in terms of conversations that she's had with the SBS senate. They did do the Category IV Review and in that Review the review team acknowledged the fact that there were a number of courses in Category C that had not been offered, and that report was approved by the Senate, that the Category IV from CSBS had changed those courses and they had re-categorize A, B, and C. The Category IV review was well underway before there was any notification that there was a possibility that some courses would be cut from the Core. The Senate is the body that will make final decision on whether to cut from 9 to 6 hours. That is the first idea that the Senate has to come forward with, and then, they will decide which category is cut, or whatever.

Dean Wallace continued that the Senate obviously knows that Social Sciences is important, and for the majority of UNI's majors, these are the only Social Science courses that they will take during their college career. For middle school teaching majors, these courses are likely to be the social science content that they will receive. Dean Wallace read statements from

students from the social science program review conducted last year, most of them favorable. Directing her comments to a non-favorable review, she asked, "Why have do we have a LAC? Why not eliminate all but our major courses? The Senate knows the answer to this and the conversation on Capstone was a wonderful conversation and all talked about the importance of Capstone as part of the LAC. Why is the University Faculty Senate voting to cut the Core by an additional three hours? The Core has already been successfully cut by two hours by reducing the Humanities requirement from 8 to 6. So why is there a need to continue the cut? Why is the University Faculty Senate voting to reduce the hours from the Social Sciences at precisely the time in history when projects such as the American Democracy Project, in which UNI is expected to be a player, are concerned about the decreasing rates of participation in the civic life of America in voting, activism, volunteerism, local grassroots associates, and other forms of civic engagement that are necessary for the vitality of our democracy. And a project that proposes to increase the number of undergraduate students who understand and are committed to engaging in meaningful civic actions. The only explanation for the hours reduction thus far is that an additional cut will "smooth the way to graduation." This explanation, based on practicality and not principle, is just not good enough. Checking enrollment and class sizes in Category IV, there are no problems here. Students have been able to enroll in courses of their choice; there is no bottleneck in the Social Science Category, and she fails to see how reducing the hours in the category will smooth the way to graduation. According to this rationale, why not eliminate 12 hours from the Core? It should follow that graduation would be four times smoother. Thus, in light of the original Board of Regents mandate, which asks the University of Northern Iowa to evaluate the Core, the University Faculty Senate is now voting today to reduce the number of hours in the LAC to make graduation easier for students. She is asking the Senate to base any action it takes on a more academic rationale.

Senator MacLin stated that he appreciates Dean Wallace's remarks and wishes we had heard these several meetings ago because they are important. As a new senator he let people know he was open for people to come to him with concerns, and he was contacted by a person on the Category IV Review telling him that there may be a problem on this document that they had spend over a year working on and the LACC had disregarded it. Again, things are moving, there are numerous drafts, and you don't know what people are doing or not doing, but there was a process involved. There have been real and perceived concerns about the LACC's proposals and he was contacted by someone with concerns that this proposal seems to be "coming down from the top and it's going fast." He discussed this with Chair Heston at the beginning of the year, and she had indicated that this was not coming up in the near future. He has been sensitive to the process of this whole thing and the whole process doesn't seem to be going in a good way. We've been told that the LACC is working on the Senate's behalf,

and he has even attended one of their meetings, and it feels as though they have their mind set on what they want to happen and that they were trying to package it. It doesn't seem like this is a recommendation, it seems like it is something that they want to happen. If a committee is charged with making a recommendation and they make a recommendation, then that's a recommendation; they don't keep coming back with recommendation after recommendation after recommendation until it is simplified enough to where the Senate might vote for it. And he's very concerned about this whole thing and doesn't feel good about the process and how it has come forth, which is why he is very much opposed to it. As far as the cut in hours, we'll all live with it. As far as what categories, we'll all live. But what we won't survive is poor process, and as a Senate, if we're not 100 percent sure about our process, that's where the problem comes in. And that's why he has taken the stance he had. Senator MacLin thanked the Senate for listening to him.

Senator vanWormer noted that she wanted to follow up on what Dean Wallace is saying, making a strong case for Social Sciences. She hopes this body will vote against the motion and vote to keep the 9 hours. She has documentation from the LAC and it is very interesting as to what the students said. It is a very positive report with 839 students surveyed. In the survey over 81 percent of the respondents were either very much or somewhat satisfied with their choice of classes. These are the most popular classes on campus we're talking about that are under these 9 hours; Psychology, Sociology, Women, Men and Society, The Global View, very important courses. Over 52 percent responded positively that this category had changed their perspective to a great degree. The core of critical thinking is in these courses. The students who need these types of courses are going to be the ones who will not to take 9 or more hours of Social Sciences. Most students indicated that the courses provided knowledge and skills that would help them be informed and active citizens. Just under 50 percent said they would be more likely to read a book, newspaper report or magazine article. If is this all we do to students this would be fantastic. Students are somewhat likely to use ideas and information from these places elsewhere. She noted that this is really the heart of college education and these courses should come early in a student's career, and she is in favor of maintaining the 9 hours and even adding on to it.

Senator Chancey remarked that he couldn't agree more in part with Senator vanWormer when she says that these courses in this College are some of the most popular and important. In response to Dean Wallace, he was gratified to hear those student comments since that gives him confident that we have students graduating that can write. The idea that the LACC is going to reach a consensus that is in agreement with all parts of campus will not be possible. The LACC, as part of the Senate, did not come down in agreement with the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences recommendations, and they do not wish to "paper" over that difference. Why is it 9 to 6 hours? From his perspective on the

LACC, is that it is a matter of balance. By having six hours in Social and Behavioral Science, it is the same as the six hours that remain in the Natural Sciences. There is a balance between the parts of the Core. There is no question that this Core is sufficient to an educated person and he would hope that faculty would advise students to broaden their base by taking courses from many areas.

Senator Wurtz added that when looking at evidence that says this is a class that makes students want to read a book in, if we cannot say that about 90 percent of all of our classes we have a huge problem. And we cannot say it in support of one; it has to apply to all areas.

Senator Varzavand noted that the University would be losing its identity by reducing the LAC in general. And to reduce the LAC so students can add a couple of more classes to their major program is wrong. He clearly understands this is to expedite the graduation of students but let's not do this because of general education, which the principle of this university was based upon.

Senator Ogbondah asked Dr. Kopper, who met with both Dean Wallace and the faculty of the SBS College on this issue, to summarize those discussions and what came out of those discussions.

Dr. Kopper responded that part of the problem has been the relatedness of all of this. A lot of this discussion occurred last spring after the Category IV Review committee had been meeting. As soon as the LACC was aware of the Board of Regents' recommendations they contacted the Category IV Review Committee. Looking at this in terms of balance, they looked at peer institutions where the average number of social science hours is 5 with the most frequent being 3. That is when they began looking at the four courses that were left from Group C and combining them in to Group A and B. One comment they hear frequently is the desirability of a small class size and the class size in this category is very large, an average of 89, which may be due to their popularity. A possible advantage of reducing from 9 to 6 hours is that you could reduce class size rather than eliminate sections, which is something the Committee hears frequently from faculty as being a good thing because you can have more interaction and writing opportunities. When this issue was raised there was a lot of opposition. And when the LACC brought this proposal to the Senate in November they brought the tables from the Category IV Report so the Senate was aware. The LACC has tried to bring forth their recommendations as well as to keep the Senate informed of the opposition. In response to Senator MacLin's comment that the LACC disregarded the Category IV Report, Dr. Kopper stated that the LACC never disregards a Category Report, they take them all very seriously. Why there has been a change in the stated proposal is because the LACC takes very seriously the input they receive from faculty and the consultations that they conduct. Once they had ideas on paper and met with the Non-Western Cultures, the Dean, the College

Senate, Personal Wellness, they did in fact make some revisions to that draft based on input they received. After the Faculty Senate asked the LACC in November to visit all the college senates with the proposal they then made further changes because the LACC values the input they receive and take it very seriously.

In response to Senator Ogbondah's comment, the fact that those courses in Group C were not being taught started the LACC looking at reducing hours and combining into two groups. At the Faculty Senate's request, the LACC visited all the college senates and did not receive any opposition from any of the other college senates. The LACC has the responsibility to represent all the colleges and to look at the Core as a university-wide program and not as individual categories. The CSBS did voice opposition to the reduction of hours but not the other senates.

Senator Smith remarked that one way to look at this is in terms of parallelism to other programs at other universities. Typical, similar programs at other universities are about 37 hours; if approved, our program will have 37 hours plus the wellness course for 3 hours and a Capstone for 2 hours making it 42 hours. The LACC feels they can justify those additions to the typical program and are comfortable with that. Should we keep the extra three hours in Social Sciences? You can make arguments for an extra three there, an extra three in Humanities, and other courses. There is a range of courses in there that you can go either way with and end up with 40 - 50 hours. What is important on the Social Sciences issue is the concern of the knowledge of the future. He takes very seriously the idea that this is a Core and that it ought to be teaching Core knowledge. In Social Sciences you currently have Core knowledge spread over 18 courses in that category. Is that all Core knowledge or are we teaching students a lot of things that are nice to know but not really Core knowledge? In talking with a colleague, Dr. Darrel Davis, who was involved in development this program, he said that when putting this category together there was a lot of concern by the then General Education Committee to get people in CSBS to shrink what they had down to a smaller set of courses that had more Core knowledge and there was a lot of resistance to do that. Are students losing that much if they only take two courses? If that category consisted of only five compacted courses designed to deliver Core knowledge in Social and Behavioral Science he would oppose a reduction from 3 to 2. But looking at 18, going from 3 to 2 is not that big a hurt from an educational standpoint and that is why he thinks this motion should be approved.

Dr. Shott commented that he is enthusiastic for Social Sciences along with Dean Wallace and Senator vanWormer, and also agrees with others that our students should be encouraged to take courses across the curriculum. It's a curious way to laud the liberal arts by proposing to reduce the credit hour requirements. Quantity is no proof of quality but it seems that the reduction of quantity is even a poorer justification of quality. In

response to Dr. Kopper's commented that no other colleges besides Social Sciences objected to the proposal, no other college is being reduced in a way that Social Sciences is. As far as the 37 hours that Senator Smith talked about, his perspective is that the requirements of other institutions are very difficult to make sense of and they do not lend themselves to reductions to simple numbers that may be statistically accurate. President Koob is fond of comparing UNI to Truman State; Truman State's liberal arts curriculum is 60 hours. We could make an argument there of increasing our hours. He agrees with Senator Chancey's comment that the existing curriculum is inadequate but it seems a poor argument to cut it if it is bad now. We should contemplate increasing the LAC requirements in other categories such as Humanities and Natural Sciences. He does remember that the Provost was one of the chief advocates of increasing the Social Science category from 6 to 9 hours years ago. He did note that every one is entitled to change his mind but he remembers the Provost attending one of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminology Department meetings and strongly advocating an increase. He is curious to know why what was a good idea 10 or 11 years ago is not a good idea any longer?

Provost Podolefsky responded that the present program has been in place since 1988 and he did not arrive on campus until 1990, and it was 9 credits then, and what was changed was putting titles to the categories.

Senator Swan noted that much of what's been said is very compelling but he is curious as to why reducing other areas, by moving Capstone, and other changes did not generate the kinds of concerns about Core knowledge that we are now hearing. It seems to him to be more of a balancing, which he doesn't particularly like in light of the other changes the Senate has made. But in light of those other changes, why should he not think that this category should be reduced?

Senator Walsh responded that balance may be overrated and that Category IV represents a somewhat more diverse set of areas than others. These are areas that are critical to becoming an educated person, history, political science, geography, psychology and now we're asking them to pick only two. With three courses you'd get a better representation of all those important areas of the educated person.

Senator vanWormer noted that there are mini grants available to faculty to propose new courses in Category C.

Senator Bankston stated that one of the primary reasons given for looking at this area is that there are four courses that are not being taught in Group C. There are currently 8 courses listed so that must mean that the remaining four offer a viable choice for students. Thus, originally there were 18 options in the category for students and that is now down to 14, which is very comparable to several other categories. Balance is not a primary rational

to make decision. A decision in relation to the LAC for changes ultimately should be content based.

Senator MacLin commented that in discussion it was noted, "no one else complained." Who else would complain but the people that were affected? Maybe they know they have a little more insight but he's concerned in the process that says only a very small minority complained that were affected and therefore its ok to do this. If that's the process that we're dealing with then let's not even have these meetings and just go ahead and approve all these things. He would like to think that unless there is compelling reason to believe otherwise that the way to go is with the college or department that has an issue with these things. He's concerned about what other kinds of recommendations will follow with the next category review if and when another small minority complains, and he will give them a lot of wake and default, and will support them unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise. He also thanked the Senate for extending this meeting to 6:00 because he thought it turned out quite well.

Chair Heston reminded the Senate that it is now 6:03 and there is a motion on the table; if we adjourn that motion will become the first order of business at our next meeting. And as our next meeting is the last meeting of the year, we have a great deal of business that needs to be addressed then.

Senator Smith responded to Senator MacLin's comment that the only ones that are going to complain are those that will be affected implies that no one else on this campus cares about the LAC, which he does not think is true. He thinks everyone cares about it and we can expect those whose programs that are being cut to complain. On the issue that they should have extra say because they are the experts, that ignores the fact that they have a stake in this and are going to be biased. The LACC did take everyone's input into account and he was surprised that there weren't more concerns expressed by the colleges other than CSBS.

Senator Swan noted that he remembers many Humanities faculty did complain about the changes to Humanities, and many Humanities did complain in a form very different than other faculty. Many just complained by being demoralized, which is often a silence, and there was an awful lot of that. We have a responsibility to have a balanced curriculum, otherwise we are communicating to the world that this is the most important way of conducting oneself, way of knowing, way of organizing knowledge, much more important than the other areas. And we don't want to say that any one area necessarily is the most important, we want to communicate that we have an appreciation of a balance.

The Senate indicated that it was ready for a vote.

The amended proposal per Senator Swan is to reduce the Social Science category from 9 to 6 hours leaving the three groups the same and asking the LACC to work with the CSBS to distribute them

into two groups, a Group A and Group B, with students required to take 3 hours from Group A and 3 hours from Group B.

Motion was defeated by one vote with 6 voting for, 7 voting against, and 1 abstention.

Chair Heston thanked the Senators for their attention and time in this lengthy discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Senator Chancey; second by Senator MacLin.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dena Snowden
Faculty Senate Secretary



March 31, 2004

To: Melissa Heston, Chair, University Senate
From: Jeffrey S. Copeland, Head, Department of English Language & Literature
Subject: Summary of "ACT Exemption" Study Report

Melissa,

In response to the motion made by the University Senate on March 10, 2003 (see University Senate Minutes for 10 March 2003, page 9, <<http://www.uni.edu/senate/minutes/oldminutes/03102003minutes.pdf>>) that the English Department prepare a report "on the evaluation of this waiver" (ACT Exemption), I would now like to provide you with a summary of this report. I would be most grateful if you would have the following report either distributed to the members of the University Senate or read into the minutes, as you see fit and as most appropriate.

In summary, the English Department conducted a study involving 782 UNI students and has formed an extensive report based upon the findings of that study. The study was composed of two related parts: A). An examination/evaluation of the writings of UNI students, and B). A survey examining "how" the students were meeting the writing requirement (whether ACT score exempted, took the writing class at UNI, took the writing class elsewhere, other...). Among the conclusions of this study were the following:

Conclusion #1: When the writings of those students who were "not" ACT Exempt and who took the "College Reading and Writing" course (620:005) at UNI were evaluated, the results indicated these students scored well within the "range of desirable characteristics" established for Liberal Arts Core writing tasks (using the established guidelines for desired learning outcomes for writing in LAC courses to evaluate the writings). Therefore, the "College Reading and Writing" course is, in fact, providing UNI students with the desirable writing skills and the goals and objectives of that course are being met.

Conclusion #2: Those students who were "ACT Exempt" (who had scores of 25 and above on the English portion of the ACT Test) who did "not" take the "College Reading and Writing" course still scored significantly higher, on average, than those students who were not ACT Exempt and who took the writing course. In other words, those who were exempted from taking the writing course produced writings that were judged to be significantly better in quality than those students who were not exempt and who completed the writing course.

Conclusion #3: Those students who were, technically, exempted (who scored 25 and above on the English portion of the ACT Test) from the writing requirement BUT WHO WERE STILL REQUIRED TO TAKE THE WRITING COURSE because of specific program requirements (students in the School of Business, some programs in the College of Education, Pre-Pharmacy, and several other special programs) scored the highest of all, on average, when their writings were evaluated. In short, those who were exempted but who were still required to take the writing course improved their writing abilities significantly, to the point where their writing went from “excellent” to “outstanding” in terms of quality.

In interpreting the data from the study, two matters immediately became clear. First, the “ACT Exemption” did, in fact, do exactly what was envisioned it would do. That is, those students who were exempted wrote at a skill level even higher than those who were not exempted and took the writing class. In that sense, the ACT Exemption did, in fact, work as was originally envisioned. Second, those students who were exempt but who were still required to take the writing class because of specific program requirements scored significantly higher than those who were exempted who did not have to take the writing course.

It was the second item listed above (that those who were exempt and who were still required to take the writing class had their writing abilities significantly improved) that generated the most discussion among members of the Department of English Language and Literature. Current studies in the effects of writing instruction have indicated that the students who benefit most from writing instruction are those who already have excellent writing skills.

In summary, after studying the information gathered through the study and survey, the Department of English Language and Literature faculty, at a regularly scheduled Department Meeting, voted on, and approved, the following motion:

“Regarding the waiver of the LAC 5A “Writing and Reading” requirement for students who have an ACT English score of 25 or above, the Department of English Language and Literature endorses permitting this waiver to expire without renewal at the end of its approved term (the 2004 Summer Session).”

This motion was made, and passed, based upon deliberation related to the education merits of writing instruction for all students (see comments above about those who were exempted but who were still required to take the writing class).

The recommendation reflects the judgment of the members of the Department of English Language and Literature in an area that is a University-wide concern. The English Department’s recommendation is just that -- a “recommendation.” This matter is a University-wide issue/concern, and the final decision as to whether the “ACT Exemption” should be continued or allowed to expire is, ultimately, a decision for the

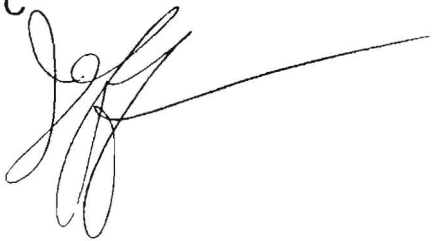
University Senate (the group that put the Exemption in place in the first place) and/or upper administration.

Furthermore, the University Writing Committee has reviewed the study and the recommendation of the English Department faculty. The University Writing Committee concurs with the English faculty.

If the University Senate would like to hear a full report on the study and the deliberations of the English Department faculty, the Head of the Department of English Language and Literature would be happy to present such a report.

This summary of the report is respectfully submitted to the University Senate this 31st day of March, 2004.

JSC

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.